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ABSTRACT

Community participation has become an important aspect of almost any change efforts in public schools in recent years. The movement has waxed and waned through the decades since the Common School, but is enjoying renewed interest with the emphasis placed on involving stakeholders in systemic change efforts. Typically, community participation has taken the form of seeking "buy-in" of parents and community members. The shape of the new systems that are being designed by current restructuring teams will be determined largely by the makeup of the team itself. Where multiple perspectives are represented, the team must grapple with diversity but the product will be more likely to represent the views of many instead of a select group. After an exploration of the relevant literature on systemic change, community participation, race, gender, and class, this paper examines membership patterns exhibited in six middle schools seeking to increase parental and community participation. The study found that minority and father populations were underrepresented and drew implications for the impact of this lack of balance on school design teams. There was in this study a pervasive lack of racial, gender, and class balance in school change team membership and participation. Further understanding of non-participating populations and research focusing on that question should be undertaken. Those empowered teams that already exist should be studied for patterns of participation, patterns of attrition, and similarities across resultant designs coming from teams of similar makeup. Contains 39 references. (Author/DK)

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By

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Abstract

Community participation has become an important aspect of almost any change efforts in public schools in recent years. The movement has waxed and waned through the decades since the Common School, but is enjoying renewed interest with the emphasis placed on involving stakeholders in systemic change efforts. Typically, community participation has taken the form of seeking "buy-in" of parents and community members. The shape of the new systems that are being designed by current restructuring teams will be largely determined by the makeup of the team itself. Where multiple perspectives are represented, the team must grapple with diversity but the product will be more likely to represent the views of many instead of a select group. After an exploration of the relevant literature on systemic change, community participation, race, gender, and class, this paper explores membership patterns exhibited in six middle schools seeking to increase parental and community participation. The study finds that minority and father populations were underrepresented and draws implications for the impact of this lack of balance on school design teams.

Stakeholder Participation

The idea that various individuals or groups who have compelling interests in schooling should be involved in changes affecting them or their families is reaching new levels of popularity with the onset of systemic change methodologies which emphasize stakeholder participation. The terms *community participation* and *stakeholder approach* have several meanings and interpretations but are rooted in stakeholder evaluation (Stake, 1986). Mauriel (1989) points to stakeholders as "those attempting to influence the allocation of resources or intended direction of the school system" (p. 147). Similarly, Bowles (1989) defines stakeholders as "any individuals, groups, or institutions that may have an interest or stake in the resolution of actual or potential conflict over the allocation of resources, values or power" (p. 168). Power is central to the definition of stakeholder, though oftentimes stakeholders, other than professional educators, are not given substantive power (Rogers, 1968).

The term stakeholder has taken on great importance in current change initiatives. Whether a school is engaged in Total Quality Management (TQM), systemic change, school design or restructuring efforts, the importance of stakeholder participation has been seen as central to substantial change in schools (Holtzman, 1993; Wagner, 1993). Extensive use of terms such as "customer" or "client" in the traditions of TQM is now being applied to schools.

Within a school community, there are major groups which have interests in the school or are affected by the educational system. Such groups can be considered the major stakeholders in the community of interest (Reigeluth, 1992). Among these groups are the political, religious, and commercial leaders in the community, the social service and educational personnel, as well as the student and parental populations. Early identification of stakeholder groups is crucial in order to avoid the misperception that change is a top-down mandate (Stevenson & Pellicer, 1992). Haphazard or late identification of stakeholder groups can lead to resentment and sabotage of educational design efforts (Havelock, 1973).

Systems Theory

The essence of systems theory in current public school change efforts is summed up by Waller, (1961) when he notes that, "As a social organism the school shows an organismic interdependence of its parts; it is not possible to affect a part of it without affecting the whole." (p. 6). Systems theories as applied to schools, then, are concerned with identifying these interdependencies and designing new systems of learning that more adequately advance the human condition. While systems theories are based heavily on military industrial approaches to the creation of instruction and the current TQM movement, systems thinking as it applies to the current wave of school change is more interested in holistic thinking, stakeholder participation, local control, and equity than previous movements of systems technologies.

One notable agreement in educational systems design literature is the importance of community participation. Reigeluth (1992) and Banathy (1991) express concern over the state of community "buy-in" at the outset of design efforts. Reigeluth points to the importance of fundamental support for change efforts: "the change process is far more likely to be successful if there is grass-roots community support for fundamental change (p. 120)" Banathy echoes the importance of community support, "[support] has to be generated by inviting and encouraging a genuine involvement of representatives of the community in the design activity" (p. 168).

Aside from the political benefits of community support, stakeholder participation in systemic change pays off with more powerful ideas for creating a new school environment. Systems theory emphasizes stakeholder participation because bringing those with competing ideologies together over a problem is more likely to expose important interconnections among system components. Group-based collaborative design while more difficult to accomplish is also more likely to highlight effects that changes in one part of the system have on other parts of the system.

We believe that decision-making powers should be shared equally with parents, social service agents, government leaders, business constituents, religious leaders, minority rights groups, even students where possible. Historically, community participation and community control movements (Daresh, 1992; Fantini, Gittell and Magat, 1970) have not delivered significant shifts in school-based power structures. The potency of community participation lies not in its ability to co-opt political support for already-made decisions. Instead, the power of community participation in the change of our public schools comes from shifting power and responsibility to members of a community who are all invested in educational outcomes. The current structure of public schools places much of the power in the hands of boards of education and educational administrations who some theorists view as perpetuating the hegemony of the current educational system (Dawson, 1982).

In addition, parental and community participation *invites* ideological conflict among divergent community factions which can be both a source of energy and a source of vexation. The collaborative development of school and public policies, however, is the hallmark of our democratic society (Giroux, 1992, Crowson, 1992). As Cohen, (1983) puts it so aptly, "if one believes that there are important differences of view, it seems sensible to want the views to be articulated in the process of policy argument and political decision. " (p. 79).

Race, Class and Gender

The importance of hegemony and social stratification cannot be underestimated when considering stakeholder participation in school change. The intractability of American educational problems is linked to power struggles within the society and educational community (Sarason, 1990). It is our view that the only way to significantly change our educational system in America is to move from a power structure which focuses on boards of education, professional educators, and researchers to one which involves *all* stakeholders in educational change efforts.

Views of policy making in schools range from Marxist theories that schools are a tool to "undermine the capacity of the system to perpetuate inequality." (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 249) to Post Structuralist views of schools as "autonomous, with an indirect rather than direct link with the economy." (Kane, 1989, p. 76). The fact that power is an immutable force in public school policy making is unavoidable. As Counts (1932) succinctly puts it, "on all genuinely crucial matters, the school follows the wishes of the groups or classes that actually rule society." (p. 25). The power that individuals wield as a result of their social status based on race, class or gender identity has an impact on the resulting plans for school change that emerge from the team's efforts.

Most of the research conducted in education about race, class and gender has focused on the students in the school environment (e.g., Grant, 1985; Sadker & Sadker, 1985; Moore & Smith, 1986; Velez, 1989). A few important sources of information do exist with regard to race and parental participation (e.g., Collins, Moles & Cross, 1982; Epstein, 1987). One important study was conducted by Becker & Epstein, (1982) in which it was found that parental educational level was related to teacher's efforts to involve parents in homework with children. Among teachers who infrequently involved parents the claim was made that teachers perceived "parents who had less than a high school education [as lacking] the ability or willingness to help" (Epstein, 1987, p. 131).

Lightfoot, (1978) identifies basic misunderstandings between teacher and parent populations as key to the "closed doors" that "black dreams" suffer in the current educational system. While parents see teachers as hopeless with regard to their children, teachers "continue to view [black parents] as uncaring, unsympathetic, and ignorant of the value of education for their children and unconcerned about their children's academic success in school." (p.166). Lightfoot, therefore sees the central difficulty with minority parental involvement as misperceptions between teachers and parents.

Comer (1988) extends this argument by identifying that some parents, ashamed of their speech, dress or failure to hold jobs, maintain a defensive posture which can lead to hostility and avoidance of any contact with schools. Comer suggests that a mutual distrust builds among populations who are unfamiliar with one another which can lead to alienation between school and home. This alienation in turn produces a difficulty in nurturing a bond between child and teacher that can support development and learning. The child becomes disappointed in school and risks dropping out of the educational system entirely. This is a vicious cycle which repeats itself because students who drop out of school and in turn have families of their own become parents who cannot walk school halls with dignity because of their shame from dropping out. Invitations to parents to become involved via fliers mailed home will not break through these difficult walls of dissonance, shame, and alienation.

Project description and methodology

This study represents a post-hoc analysis of data which emerged from a study (Carr, 1994) with a different original purpose. In Carr & Reigeluth (1993), a model for stakeholder member selection is offered as a starting place for those engaged in change team member selection. The original study's intent was to focus on the application of this model in order to improve it. This is known as formative research (Roma, 1990). The study was designed to allow for emergent data to be collected and analyzed after the original study's completion. This paper, then, is concerned with reconsidering the original data and follow-up interview data as it relates to race, gender, and class differences among parental participants in school change teams.

In this study, six schools were followed for six months during the process of selecting and initiating parental and community involvement in advisory councils. These schools, located in a major urban midwestern city (we'll call it the MidWest district) were selected from among 12 possible sites based on their demographics, diversity and perceived leadership style. Demographics such as enrollment size, relative advantage of population, minority percentage and staff size were considered in sampling as was principal approach as indicated during an initial interview on-site with the principal. Thus the sampling was *not random* but purposive in an effort to compare community participation and membership trends across several sites.

Interviews with those selecting community participants, principals, teachers, PTA leaders and observations of advisory committee meetings were the primary data collection methods. Because of the emergent trend of high attrition rates among minority parent PCAC members, follow-up personal and phone interviews were conducted with 40% of the parents involved in advisory committees. The sampling again was *not* random, but was focused particularly on minority parents and on parents who had not been as active as others. These follow-up interviews sought to identify parent perceptions of team membership issues and power. Questions centered on why members did or did not attend meetings, did or did not participate in meetings they attended, perceptions of team power, positive and negative team member characteristics, and aspects of the experience that would draw parents to more meetings.

Some Background on the School District

The MidWest district has been under court ordered bussing for over a decade. Therefore, the schools all had approximately equal numbers of minority (in this case African American) students (48%). Minority parents and community members, however, had rarely been actively involved in all the schools in this study. In an effort to broaden involvement and gain community input, the superintendent of MidWest Public Schools began the advisory council movement in association with the Effective Schools Process. This was, therefore, a top-down mandate for bottom-up involvement.

The Superintendent of MidWest Public Schools addressed the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) with comments about the "Expectations and Realities of Public Education." In his remarks he emphasized MidWest's commitment to increased community involvement.

> *Change does not occur from the top down. The Effective Schools Process empowers people in each school—teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, and community members to develop individual school improvement plans. ...By giving people greater control at their own schools, we can also hold them more accountable for the results. ...An essential element of the Effective Schools Process is parent and community involvement.*

A few months after this address, the superintendent resigned to take another position. During this time there was a great deal of concern among school principals who questioned the very survival of the advisory council movement. Changes in leadership at the top levels caused confusion briefly, but the interim superintendent made strong statements of support for the advisory council movement and selection went forward.

In terms of the two-team approach (Reigeluth, 1992) MidWest divided its teams by both function *and stakeholder group*. In other words, the design team was made up largely of professional educators. The Parent Community Advisory Committee (PCAC) was similar in function to the advisory board, and was made up largely of parents and community members. The district guidelines for membership of the PCAC require 51% parental representation. It is notable that the powerful design team is limited to *primarily* professional educator membership, and the PCAC explicitly lacks power for parental or community participants:

Advisory committees DO:
- *Strengthen the decision-making process by providing advice to the school from the community.*
- *Should improve educational outcomes within each school.*
- *Address community conditions which directly affect the health and welfare of school children.*
- *Help identify school needs and provide advice to the principal.*

Advisory committees DO NOT:
- *Dictate school board or local school policy.*
- *Deal with particular persons, whether they are teachers, students, citizens or parents.*
- *Serve as a rumor mill or gossip line.*

-from PCAC Handbook

Results

Original Study

The most startling finding based on data collected during the original study is perhaps also the most predictable. The attrition rates, participation rates, and attendance rates among minority participants were lower than non-minority participants. In all six schools African American students represented approximately 48% of the total student population (due to desegregation). However, minority parent participation on PCAC's reached a high of only 31% (See Table 1). In addition to racial inequities, there was a lack of male participation at a high of 21% of all PCAC members (See Table 2). Fathers seemed to be more active and remain active when substantial power was invested in the team. Fathers did not want to spend their time raising funds or baking cookies, but when given the opportunity were interested in curricular and school policy issues that will impact their children.

----Insert Table 1 about here----

---Insert Table 2 about here---

While these numbers are telling, even more illustrative are the individual cases (See Figures 1-6). Here we can graphically track each team's membership rates. There was only one school in which more or equal number of minority participants were in place after two or more meetings. In this case, the school was situated in the minority neighborhood,

the principal was an African American woman, and this team boasts the ONLY African American father participant in the entire study. This particular team had a focus on broad social issues and avoided getting bogged down with individual agendas which seemed to contribute to a low attrition rate. Finally, proportionately fewer minority parents were vocal in team meetings. In one case, a minority participant came and sat through three meetings without making any contribution whatsoever. In terms of attendance, minority parents were two to three times as likely to miss a meeting as their non-minority counterparts. The number of parents involved only numbered 68 total. Therefore, the findings in this study should not be generalized. These quantitative findings should be confirmed in future research in this area.

---Insert Figures 1-6 about here---

Follow-up

We were concerned with discovering *why* parents were absent, quiet and dropping out. Therefore, follow-up interviews were undertaken. From these interviews we found that most reasons cited (44%) centered on time constraints such as job conflicts or just being too busy. 13% cited family obligations, 9% cited lack of information from schools (such as next meeting time if one was missed) and 9% cited illness. Only two respondents (4%) cited transportation as an obstacle explicitly. Several parents (16%) identified feelings of "being out of it" or lack of motivation. Among these two noted that they felt the team was not going to accomplish anything substantial and one noted that her child was not interested in school, so she quit going to the meetings.

> *My child was no longer interested in school. It seemed to me that I missed a couple of meeting and then I saw his interest go down, and I just wondered why I was doing it. I mean if he's not going to be interested why should I? But now that I think back on it maybe he quit getting involved because I did miss.*

The parents were asked if they saw the team as powerful, and an interesting trend emerged here among those respondents who chose to answer the question (77%). *All* of the minority respondents felt that the team was powerful. Among those who could not say the team was powerful (a total of 52%) white women represented 71% with the remaining 29% being white men. Since white men represented only 16% of the total study, it is interesting that they felt more negative toward issues of power on the team. This could be linked to their need to deal with substantive issues where school involvement is concerned and a desire to move away from fundraising activities and other traditional parental involvement roles. It is interesting to note that all of the minority members who responded to this question (four) felt the team was powerful. However, three minority interviewees did not respond to this question at all.

When asked an open-ended question about team balance, 33% of respondents volunteered racial imbalance, 22% volunteered gender imbalance, and 11% volunteered class background or socio-economic status imbalance as inherent in the membership of their PCAC. Other imbalances among roles, for example, were rarely volunteered. Primarily, respondents viewed balance among races as the primary criterion for a balanced team.

A caution is again issued to the reader with regard to the quantitative analysis of this data. The numbers of respondents was low and after breaking them down by categories, it is really impossible to generalize from these findings. Instead it is hoped that the qualitative data enlightens those working with minority participants in similar situations. And further research into reasons for attrition rates among minority parents has already been undertaken

by the authors in Chicago, Kentucky and South Dakota in an effort to more completely understand this phenomenon.

Obstacles Parents Face

We identified many causes for the lack of minority participation including transportation to and from school, child care during meeting times, work obligations, and lack of time. Race, class and gender all interact in this study to produce high attrition and low participation among minority and father populations.

Minority participants have added difficulties of finding transportation to and from the school. One principal comment on transportation woes is illustrative of the "hidden" obstacles faced by minority participants,

> *Bussing is a problem. Ninety percent of our kids are bussed, so no one's going to step out their door to be here. In lots of cases they have to face a 20 minute drive. Or a bus ride across town with two changes .*

Other obstacles included work priorities and obligations.

> *First, parents have less energy...I guess that translates to less time. They're paying more attention to their careers and jobs, because of the e[illegible]y, I suppose. Both parents are working, and Mom doesn't have t[illegible]me here anymore.*

Child care becomes and issue when working mothers cannot fin[illegible] sitters (or afford them) in order to attend an evening meeting. If the team meets during the day, they cannot attend because they are working. If the team meets at night, parents who may not have the financial ability to hire sitters may have to leave their children at home alone. The following parent comment reflects the conflict inherent in this approach:

> *The time they set was bad. My son would have had to stay at home until after the meeting. I didn't like this time, if it had been during school, or when someone was home to just, you know ,be around ...but this neighborhood is not good enough to leave him alone in the house.*

The difficulty with these obstacles, transportation, work obligations, and child care, is that it skews the membership of change teams toward white, middle class, stay-at-home mothers and against single working parents who live in violent neighborhoods or can't afford sitters. As a result, we are not hearing the voices of certain parent populations on our change teams.

Obstacles Schools Erect

While parents face a variety of obstacles in their own environment, schools also erect certain blocks to full participation. In this case, the criteria for selection of PCAC members, administrator attitudes, and team meeting scheduling all contributed to unbalanced teams. Most schools engaged in open membership, but focused on certain parent groups. Parents who had exhibited high levels of activity in the school in the past were valued participants and at times were personally encouraged by the principal to become members of the PCAC. When asked about selection criteria, one principal offered,

> *What characteristics did the people I targeted have?*

Past involvement with school programs. Basically band, yeah, hey, Booster Parents are your best parents. I guess those are the available parents, availability. You know, they give their off time.

This focus on available parents may increase the feelings of inadequacy among lower class populations who often were working two jobs to get by. This model also exacerbates issues of "expertism" of school faculty and broad involvement. It is difficult to hear unheard voices when the only ones being targeted for inclusion are those who've been involved in the past. Another school focused its recruiting efforts entirely on the current PTA.

I felt like this, we didn't have to reinvent the wheel with this (approach), the PTA has been good to us in the past. I knew some of the names on here (pointing out PTA list). I went with personal opinion....

Therefore, membership on the team while pledged to be "open" was really full of hidden obstacles for populations that were previously uninvolved--the unheard voices remain mute. One principal identified both the pro and con of engaging active parents.

On the plus side of that criteria, you get people coming in who have worked on these kinds of teams before, so you get experienced members. On the other hand, those members also come with a set of preconceptions about the school, about how to conduct the process. They aren't a blank slate, and sometimes that can be better if you are trying to design something new.

One school had all but one member of their PCAC who were employed by the MidWest district schools. A white mother reflects on the difficulties this presented:

Out of all who attended, I was the only one who was not employed by the school district. I don't think you're going to complain about your own employer in front of other employees.

School administrator attitude towards minority participants varied, however, there seemed to be a common agreement that more participation was desirable and just not happening. Little recognition of their role in any discomfort that parents might have was observed. Two quotes are illustrative of the feelings of principals in regard to this alienation factor.

It's also good for parents to see teachers and administrators as real people, as opposed to the way they saw their own teachers when they were sent to the principal's office as students. It should break down some defensiveness that inhibits communication between educators and parents.

Some of these parents are overwhelmed by teachers. They may have been dropouts or delinquent when they were in school. They don't want to be talked down to—they want to be able to walk in these halls and maintain their dignity and pride. School should encourage parents to come in.

While these quotes illustrate a deep desire to engage minority parents in the process, they do not identify any strategies for addressing minority alienation. Suggesting getting all the key players in a room to hash through their personal issues with schools may be perceived as too dangerous. Finally, principals displayed, at times a lack of sensitivity to minority feelings throughout the process of PCAC membership. When asked if the minority members of her PCAC felt comfortable in her view, one principal responded,

Yes, they feel comfortable participating....Actually I don't recall, nothing really made me sensitive to their being uncomfortable or whatever.

While selection criteria were important determinants of a team's membership, so was administration and scheduling[1]. A common trend in many schools was to involve school personnel in the design team (teachers, administrators, staff) while relegating parents and community members to advisory boards where professional educators were often also represented. The decision-making design team met during the school day when it was almost impossible for many underrepresented populations to attend. Businessmen, working single mothers, most fathers were not able to attend regularly scheduled daytime meetings unless they obtained work release or suffered lost pay. These models encourage differential power distributions skewed toward non-working mothers, upper and middle class fathers, businessmen (who are willing to invest time and money into educational outcomes in the hopes of cutting re-training costs in the future), and professional educators.

Differential power distributions which stem in large part from feelings of professionalism among school faculty and administration (Rogers, 1968) can be another obstacle erected by schools. The current wave of change in public schools has not helped this matter. Outcomes based education, systemic change, educational design can be used in ways that exclude those who are not embroiled in the educational literature base. An example of this attitude was observed when one principal emphatically stated,

Just because you went to school doesn't make you a school expert. It would be sad for education if those who didn't have that body of knowledge were making decisions. I don't think untrained people can make school decisions any more than I'd tell my doctor how to do surgery or my accountant how to do my taxes.

The lack of minority and male representation on these teams and high levels of attrition were common difficulties, and strategies for dealing with this absence of balance varied from buddy systems and baby-sitting services, to town meetings and home visits. The idea that imbalances on the team represented a threat to the designs produced by the team occurred to only one principal,

For whatever reason, segregation, desegregation, reassignment, whatever, parents have been taken out of the process, and they need to come back in. We need the parents who are uncomfortable, our Chapter I parents, as many parents from as many different backgrounds as possible. We need to bring them here, or else we won't be addressing all the issues of parents.

During these conversations with school personnel, we began to understand that there were reasons that went beyond logistical constraints that contributed to minority parents lack of participation. During follow-up phone conversations, we anticipated some disclosure of feelings of anxiety, alienation, or misperceptions on the part of minority parents. This was not the case, however, and reflecting back it was unreasonable to expect minority parents to disclose any of these feelings about themselves. One parent did note that "other" parents felt that the school was a difficult place for them due to their educational status.

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[1] For a complete discussion of leadership styles as related to community participation membership trends, see Carr, Yang & Reigeluth (1994).

There is a lack of inclusiveness in PCAC's at both elementary and middle school level. It's less comfortable for African Americans . ...Some parents called me and expressed concerns about the PCAC's. They didn't get the minutes for missed meetings. They were made to feel uncomfortable after a couple of meetings. Anything that was out front, like legislation or speaking engagements were relegated to Whites while Blacks were asked to do fundraising.

Discussion

Generally speaking, where empowered teams *do* exist, we see an overwhelming number of participants from the middle class white mother population. This is in substantial disproportion to the general school or community population. This study shows that among six schools where minority (African American) students represented approximately 48% in all schools, minority parent participants numbered only 27%. In addition to racial inequities, there was a lack of male participation at only 16%. During follow-up conversations some specific obstacles were identified which created this disproportion among team members. Generally, minority parents cited logistical constraints such as child care, transportation, and lack of time/work schedules as their primary reasons for dropping out of change teams. These obstacles are highly related to class, race and gender issues in the parent population and produce teams that disproportionately represent white, middle-class, stay-at-home mothers.

What is the impact of this disproportionate representation on the team that will be charged with visioning the future of schools in their community? There are two important impacts on design teams that are imbalanced: 1) lack of broad based stakeholder commitment to change efforts and; 2) skewed resultant designs. It seems apparent that if stakeholder groups are disproportionately represented on powerful teams, decisions made by that team will not gain broad based public support or favor. The primary advantage to having stakeholder participation is the political cover that it offers, without this benefit, the pain of collaborative design should be heartily questioned.

Perhaps the more important implication of imbalanced design teams is the tendency for the status quo and current system to be perpetuated. Here is a simple example of this problem. One obstacle for poor parents in schools is that they may have failed at their own education. They are uncomfortable with the idea of returning to an institution that was less than helpful to them. What perspective is lost when the failures of the system are totally unrepresented on decision-making design teams? The perspective that is *most* likely to offer us substantially altered visions of schools is lost. Those who have been successful at schooling understand the current rules. They pass those rules on to the next generation in the form of their own kids, and they succeed, and the rich get richer (or at least they maintain their status). It has been noted that the toughest parents to convince about change are parents of gifted and talented learners. Their children are succeeding in this system and as long as some others are not succeeding, their kids will reap the benefits of a stratified society in which schools sort individuals instead of developing them. Those who are dropping out of the system and subsequent decision making teams that need them are likely to be the most helpful and we are losing them in the current structure of design team election/selection.

In many ways, this supports a societal and self perception among parents and community members which sees expertise and past experience in education as the most important criteria for design team membership. It is imperative that all members of a community feel empowered, feel that they do have something substantial to offer to these

new visions, that their opinions count even if they don't have a teaching certificate, college degree, or even a high school equivalency. It is important that we address the issues of all stakeholders in truly systemic change or else the resultant designs and new systems of learning will represent only the visions of a select few.

How can we rectify the situation? There may be several alternatives including public relations campaigns, careful recruiting and selection of design team members, attention to moneys spent by various factions to ensure equity, and careful de-expertising of the change processes to make them accessible to all stakeholder groups. Pragmatism, then, is the key to the work we do. It is very important that design team training programs do not exacerbate problems of expertism. Instead, perhaps we need to strongly consider taking design competencies to underrepresented populations *first* so that they can see these skills as an empowering tool that they can use to their advantage in the morass of design recommendations being made by wealthy businessmen and schooled teachers.

Another possible avenue of combat against imbalanced design teams is exclusive selection of members. While this seems counter to all we would think about creating open, balanced teams, it is evident that unless special commitments are made by participants and selectors alike, teams will remain imbalanced. Membership might be vigilantly monitored for racial, gender and class balance. Membership could also be monitored for diversity of view and stake in school change so that a diversity of perspectives is represented on all teams as much as is possible. Of course, not all people's views can be represented on a single team, but these cases show the disproportion and obstacles faced by minority parents, fathers, and parents of lower socio-economic class. While manipulating membership is a dangerous practice and remains open to abuses (e.g., a principal can stack the team with "yes" people), it may be one of the most immediate ways we can rectify the situation. The organismic tendencies of schools extends to communities and we should seek ways to combat obstacles which perpetuate racial, class and gender differences. These obstacles may be logistical in the parent's environment, and often, beyond the control of school personnel while member selection remains firmly in their hands in most cases.

Conclusion

There was in this study (and continues to be) a pervasive lack of racial, gender and class balance in school change team membership and participation. Further understanding of non-participating populations and research focusing on that question should be undertaken. We must also study carefully those empowered teams which already exist so that we can look for patterns of participation, patterns of attrition, and similarities across resultant designs coming from teams of similar makeup. These areas of research are imperative if we are to continue to advocate for empowered design teams representing broad-based community participation. Without a deep understanding of the implications of our suggestions for stakeholder participation, we are only the blind leading the blind.

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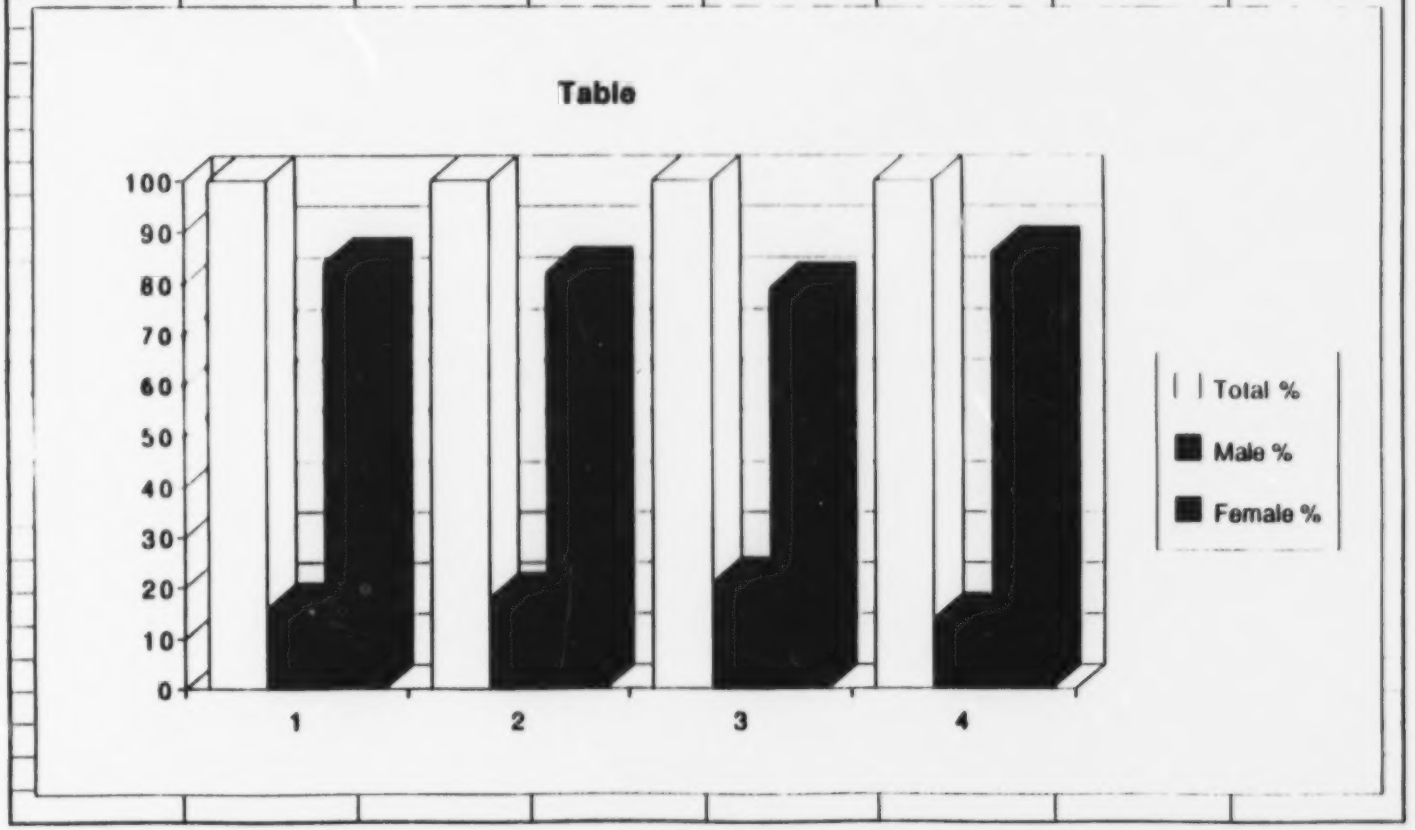
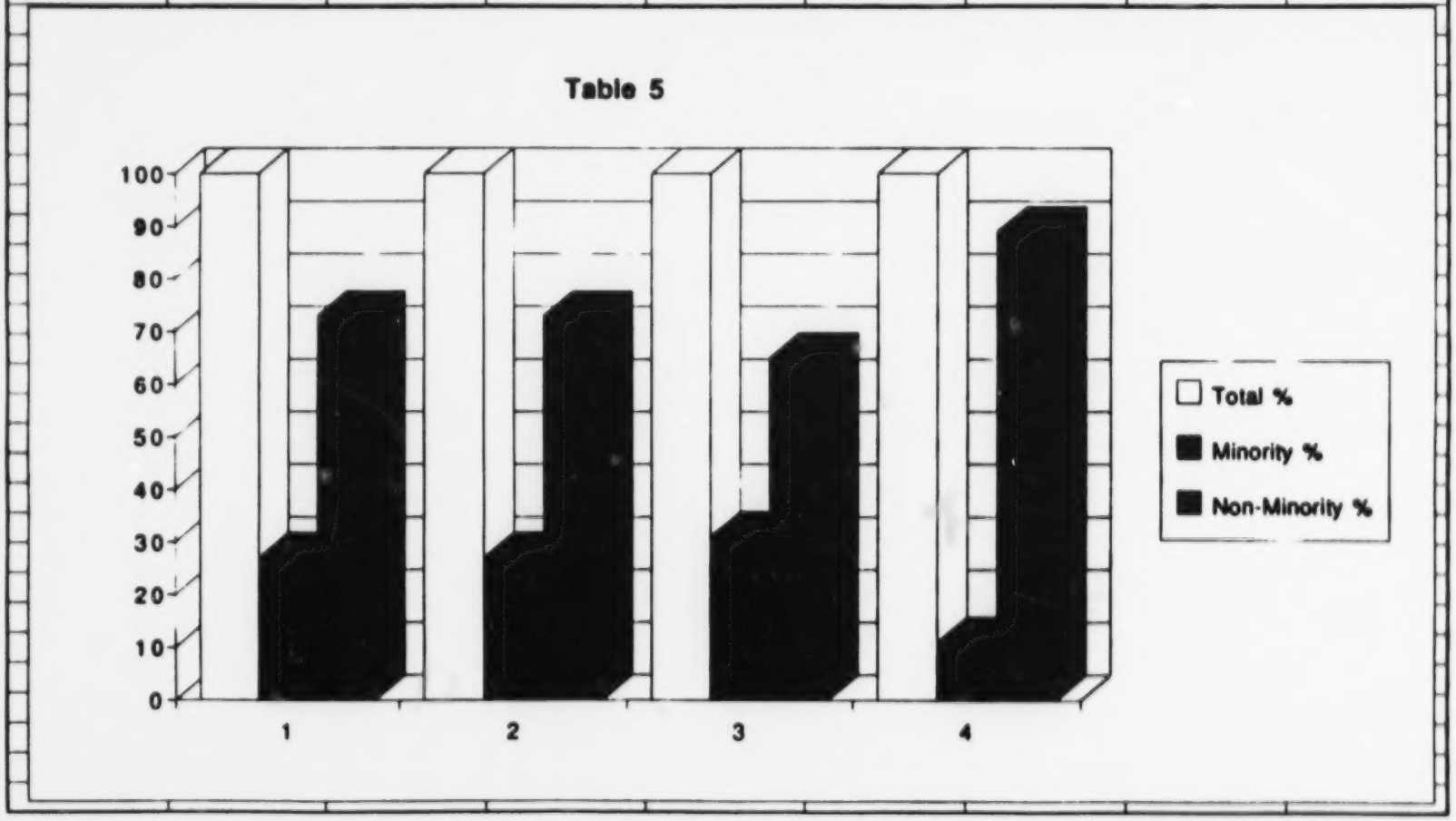
Category		Total	Male	Female	Total %	Male %	Female %
Initial Roster	6 cases	108	17	91	100	16	84
1st Meeting	6 cases	73	13	60	100	18	82
2nd Meeting	5 cases	48	10	38	100	21	79
3rd Meeting	3 cases	35	5	30	100	14	86



Category		Total	Minority	White	Total %	Minority %	Non-Minority %
Initial Roster	6 cases	108	29	79	100	27	73
1st Meeting	6 cases	73	20	53	100	27	73
2nd Meeting	5 cases	48	15	31	100	31	65
3rd Meeting	3 cases	35	4	29	100	11	89

Table 5



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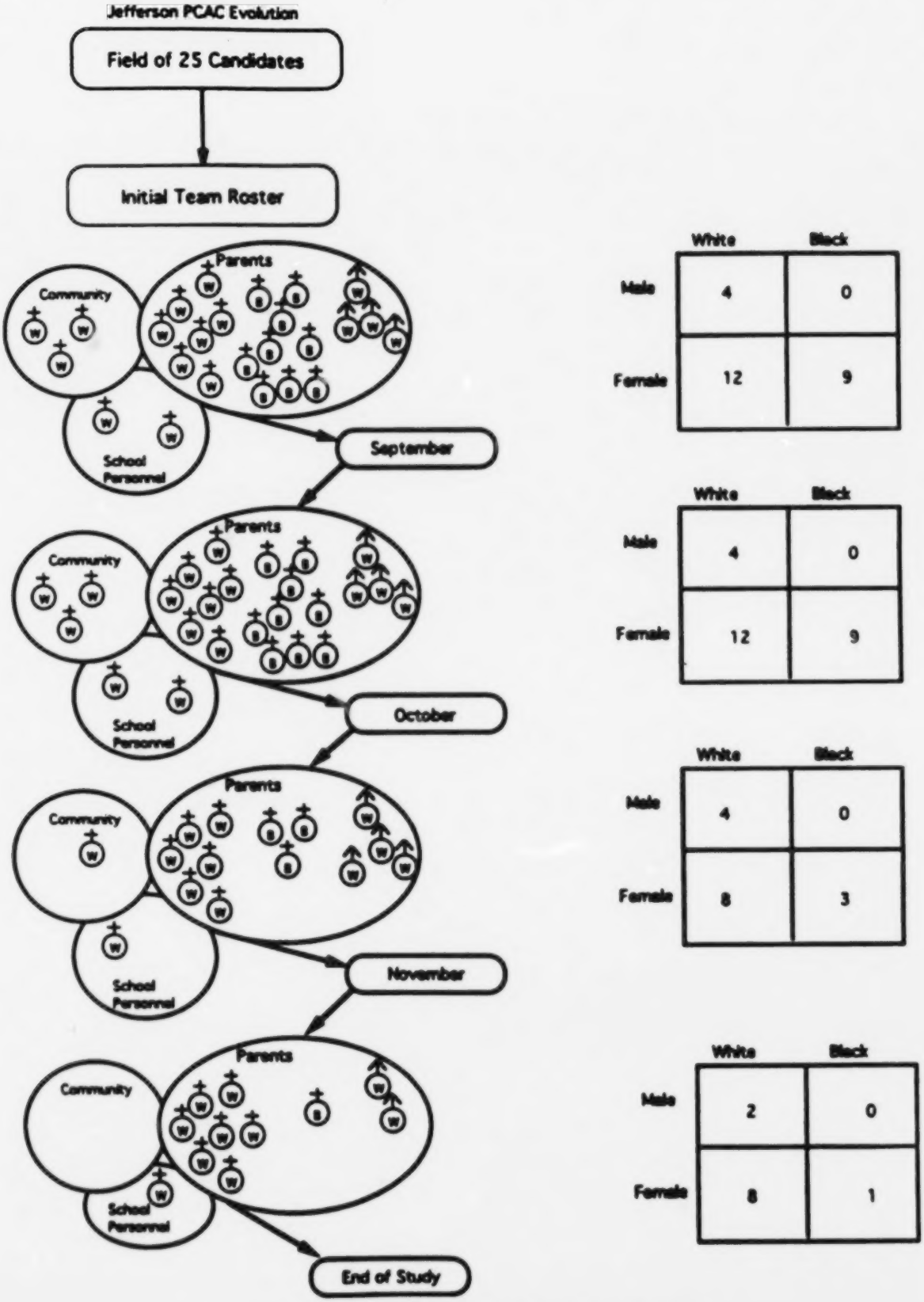

Figure 5: Jefferson Davis Middle School PCAC Evolution

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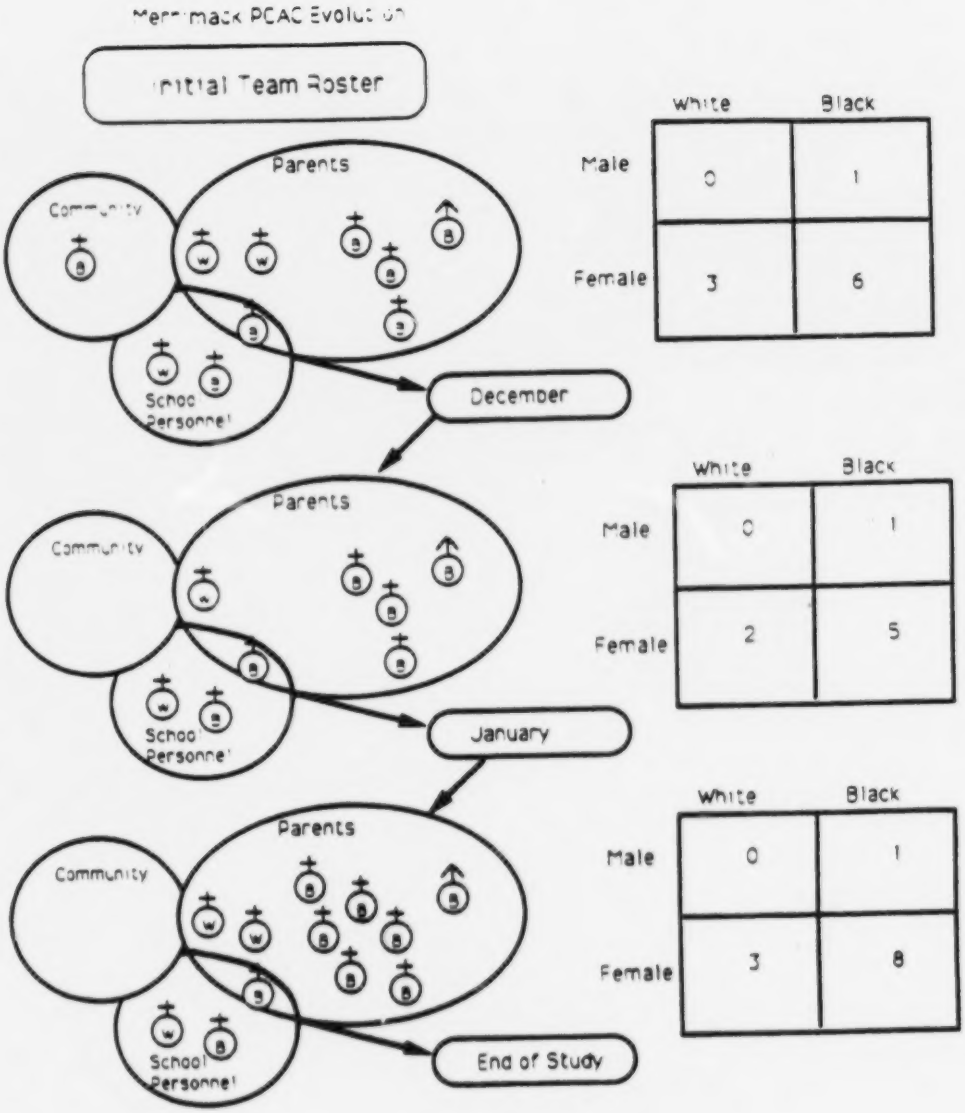

Figure Merrimack Middle School PCAC Evolution
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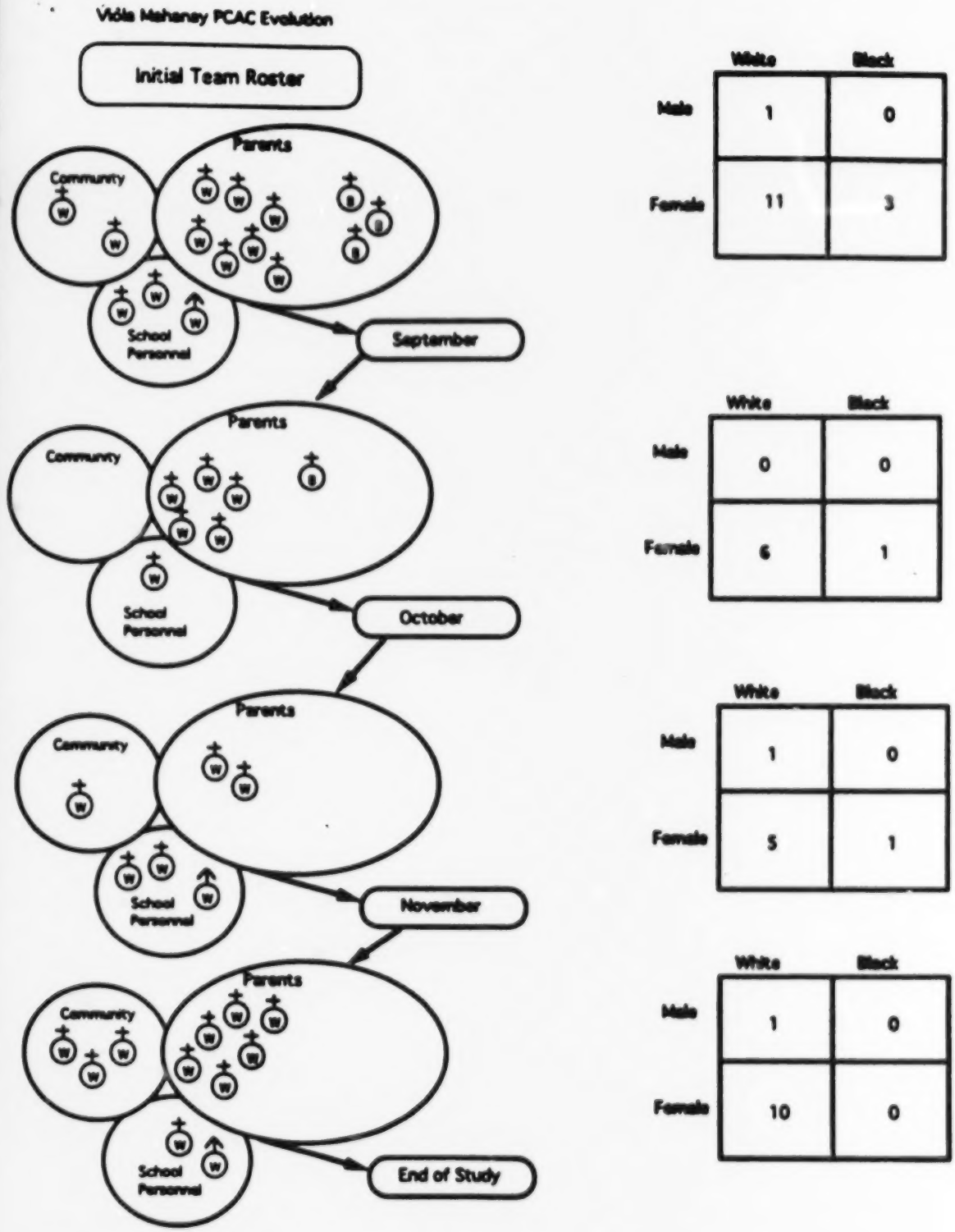

Figure 8: Viola Maharay Middle School PCAC Evolution
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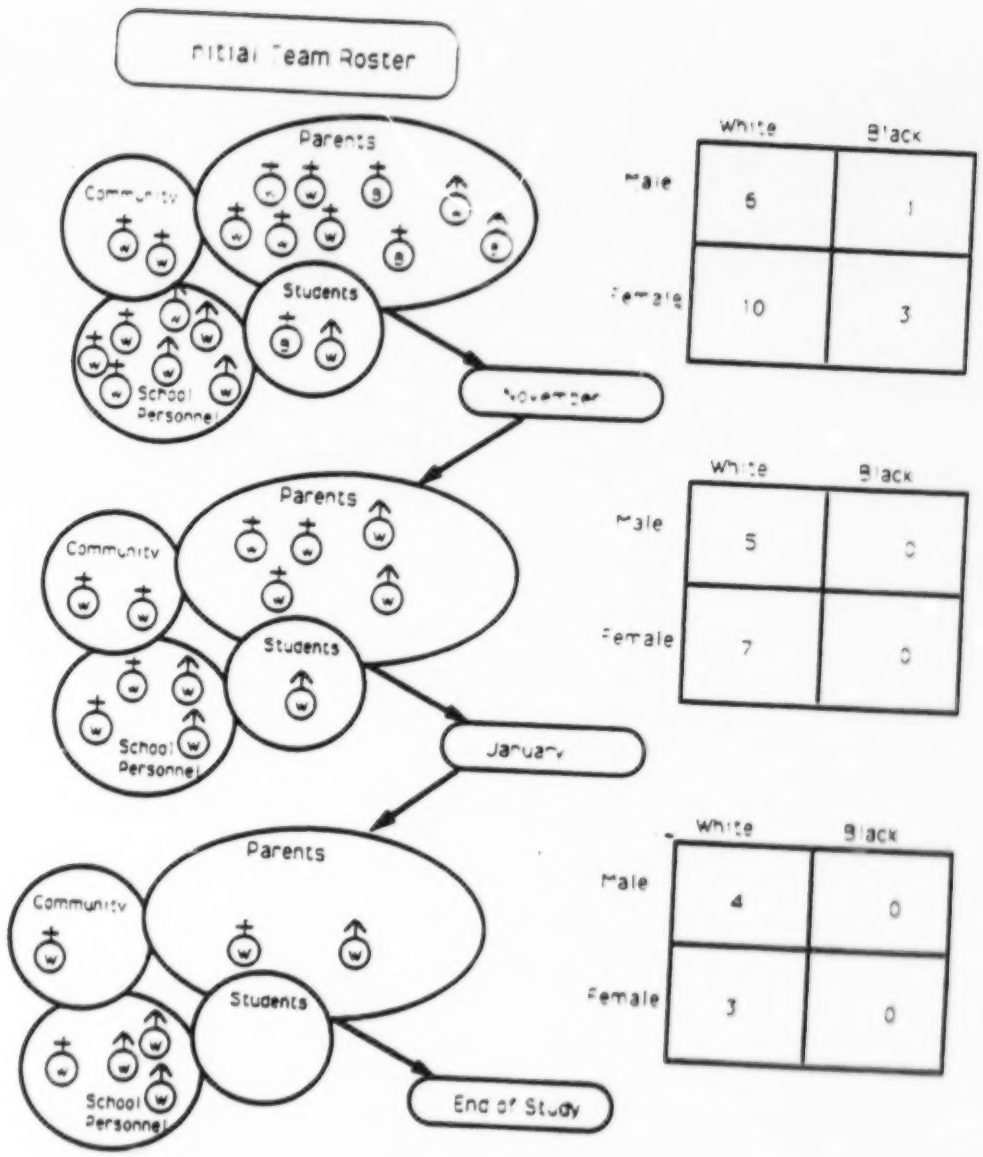

Figure McGregor Middle School PCAC Evolution
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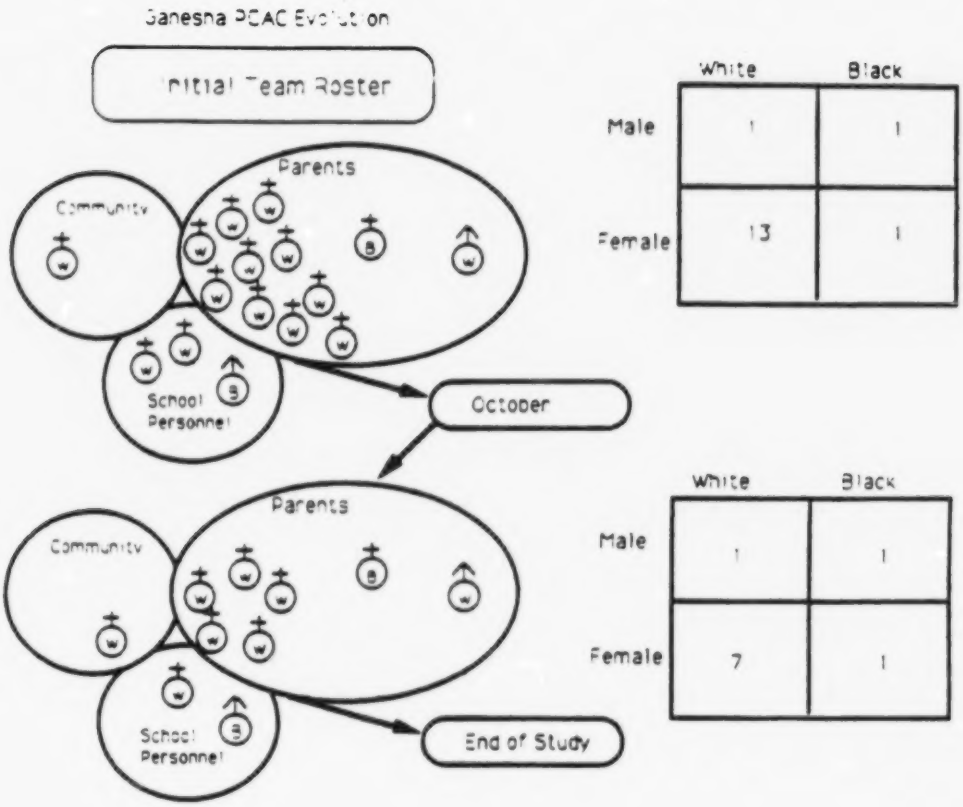

Figure Ganesha Middle School PCAC Evolution
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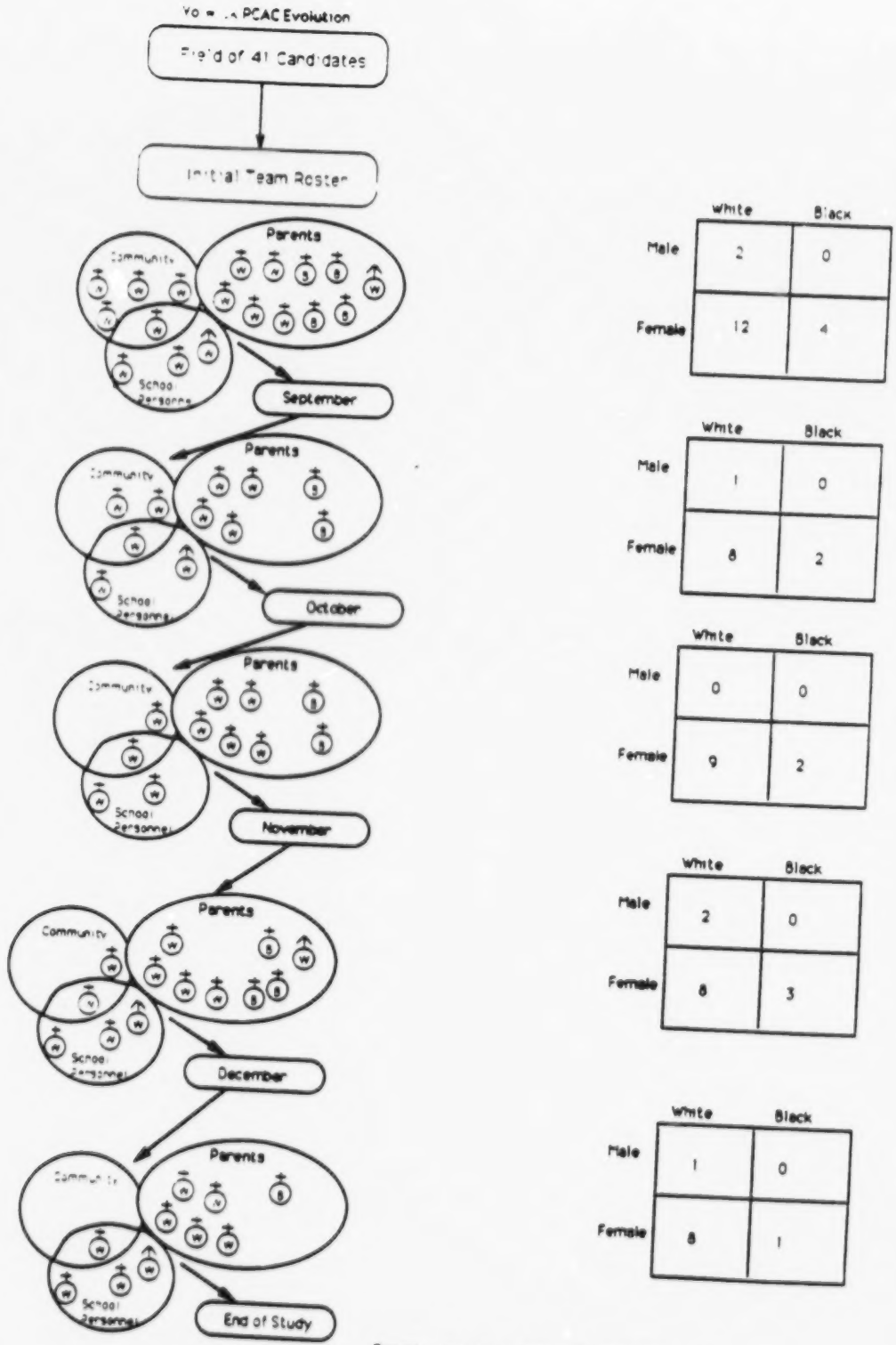

Figure Yo Wick Middle School PCAC Evolution
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